

William Blake

"To the Muses"

1. What are the Muses? What are bards, and what do they do?
2. What used to happen "on Ida's shady brow"? "In the chambers of the East"? Who lived in those places? What is the situation now?
3. Where may the Muses be wandering? What should they be doing?
4. What relationship did the Muses have with the "bards of old"? What relationship do they have with modern poets? What is the result for modern poetry?

All Religions Are One

1. What philosophical assumption does Blake begin with? What is "empiricism"? What's its opposite? (There's more than one.)
2. What is a "genius"? What is "the Poetic Genius"? What does Blake mean by "the true Man"? How can the Poetic Genius be regarded as the source of the form of the human body? How can the "genius" of a thing be the source of its bodily form? What names did "the Ancients" apply to the "genius" of a thing?
3. What does Blake conclude from the fact that human beings are alike in body? What does he conclude from their physical variety?
4. What kind of person speaks "from his heart"? If that person "intends truth," is what he speaks true? What does Blake conclude about the origin of philosophical systems? Does he conclude anything about their truth? How does he account for their variety and differences?
5. What limitation does Blake see in experience as a teacher? What does he conclude from that? What does he mean by "universal" Poetic Genius? How does his position relate to the philosophical position in "The Argument"?
6. By what name is the Poetic Genius known in different lands? How does Blake account for the origin of religion? How does he account for the differences between religions?
7. What does Blake mean by "the Jewish & Christian Testaments"? Are they different from other scriptures? Does Blake distinguish between them? What does "the confined nature of bodily sensation" have to do with the "fact" that they come from the Poetic Genius?
8. What does Blake conclude about "all Religions"? Why do they differ from one another? What is their origin?

9. How does the style of the seven principles differ from the style of the Argument? Why does it differ? How does his attitude toward religion differ from Christian orthodoxy? From “natural religion”? From that of liberals like G. E. Lessing? (Lessing tells the story of the Three Rings. A father who had a very valuable ring had two duplicates made up, then gave a ring to each of his three sons. None of the sons knew which one had the real ring and which had a duplicate. The sons represent Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. What’s Lessing’s point?)

There Is No Natural Religion [a]

1. What is the human being “in the state of nature”? What is “moral fitness”? How is “natural man” limited morally? How does “natural man” become moral? How does this view differ from the empiricists’ view? What position does Blake seem to share with the empiricists?
2. What does Blake mean by “natural or organic thoughts”? What do the empiricists conclude from principle IV? Does Blake agree?
3. What do you think of principle V? Is it true? Does it leave out or ignore anything?
4. What are the moral implications of principle VI? How does principle VI lead to the conclusions of the Argument?

There Is No Natural Religion [b]

1. How does [b] relate to [a]? Is Blake contradicting himself?
2. What does Blake mean by saying that the human being “perceives” beyond the perceptive capacity of the senses?
3. How does II [b] relate to II and III [a]?
4. What is the consequence of the empiricist view of humanity and the universe (IV [b])?
5. What does “when possessed” mean (V [b])? Who are the “few”? Who are the “many”? Why is the “mistaken soul” mistaken? What is the “All” that is adequate to satisfy Man?
6. How does VI [b] relate to V [a]? How does VII [b] relate to VI [a]? How does the Application characterize the difference between Blakean and empiricist thought? How does the Conclusion relate *All Religions Are One* to *There Is No Natural Religion*? What does the final line imply about Blake’s notion of Christ?

Songs of Innocence

"Introduction" to Songs of Innocence

1. What kind of poet is the piper? How does the Muse appear to him?
2. What form does the piper's song first take? What transformations does it undergo? Why does he write his songs? Who is the audience for *Songs of Innocence*?

"The Ecchoing Green"

1. How do the skies respond to the sun? How do the bells respond to the coming of spring? How do the birds respond to the bells? What further sounds echo on the green? (What is a green?)
2. Who is the speaker? What is seen on the green? Who sees them? How do they respond? How is this "ecchoing"?
3. What brings play to an end? Where do the children go? What are they compared to? What kind of world is being portrayed?

"The Lamb"

1. What question does the speaker pose to the lamb? Does this question make sense? How can the lamb *know*?
2. How does the speaker characterize the lamb's wool? How does the speaker characterize the echoes in the valleys?
3. Who is the lamb's maker? Who is the speaker? How does this knowledge affect our answers to the preceding questions?
4. What is the effect of all three being called by the same name? What is that name?

"The Little Black Boy"

1. What does the speaker mean by "O! my soul is white"? How might his blackness be regarded? Who regards him that way? From that point of view, what does the English child's whiteness indicate?
2. What explanation does the boy's mother give him for their blackness? How does this explanation illustrate principles in *All Religions Are One*? Where does Blake get the language that he gives to the mother? How is this appropriate?
3. What does the little black boy offer the little English boy? How does that fit with his religion? What does the little black boy want? Under what conditions can he get it?

“The Chimney Sweeper” (Songs of Innocence)

1. To whom did the child’s father sell him? Whom does the child serve?
2. Why was Tom Dacre’s head shaved? How does the speaker comfort him?
3. What happens to Tom? What are the “coffins of black”? What kind of life does the Angel release them to? What “bags” do they leave behind? What does the Angel offer Tom? On what condition?
4. How is Tom’s dream an expression of his desires?
5. How is the last line ironic? What does it promise such boys? How does the poem reflect on orthodox religion?

“The Divine Image”

1. Under what circumstances do people pray to “Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love”? How are they “virtues of delight”?
2. How can “Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love” be both God and Man?
3. What does Blake mean by stanza 3? How could this be so?
4. How do stanzas 3 and 4 reflect principles in *All Religions Are One*? What conclusion does Blake draw in stanza 5?
5. How does this poem relate to “The Human Abstract”?

“Holy Thursday” (Songs of Innocence)

1. What are “charity schools”? Why are the children “walking two & two”? How are they “in red & blue & green”?
2. Who are the “grey headed beadles”? Why are they there? What are those wands?
3. What phrases seem to recommend the children? What Bible phrases and usages do they recall?
4. Who are the “aged men”? Why are the children at St. Paul’s?
5. What is the point of the last line? How does it relate to the children’s situation? How is the Biblical allusion relevant? How is Blake’s attitude toward the institutional church relevant?

“Nurse’s Song” (Songs of Innocence)

1. What calms the Nurse? Why?
2. What does the Nurse want the children to do? What do they want to do? What argument convinces her to change her mind? What is convincing about it? What assumptions is it based on?
3. How do the children respond? What will be the effect? (Compare stanza 1.)
4. What relationship does Blake see between nature and childhood?

“Infant Joy”

Who are the speakers? Is this realistic? Is there a real counterpart to this situation? What is “actually” happening? What is the quality of interaction? How does the poem relate to “Infant Sorrow”?

Songs of Experience

“Introduction” to Songs of Experience

1. What kind of poet introduces *Songs of Experience*? What is his authority? What is his purpose?
2. What is the “lapsed Soul” capable of? Why does the Bard address Earth rather than the “lapsed Soul”?
3. What time of day is it? What time of day is anticipated? How does Earth respond to the Bard’s summons? What is Earth’s present lot?

“Earth’s Answer”

1. How does Earth respond to the Bard’s summons “Arise”? What has happened to her light? What is her emotional response? Relate this to “Introduction,” line 10, and to *There Is No Natural Religion* [b], VI.
2. What is preventing Earth from responding to the Bard? Who is “the Father of the ancient men”? Who are “the ancient men”?
3. What does the father’s “cruel, jealous, selfish fear” do to “the virgins of youth and morning”? Whose “delight” is being referred to? What is the effect on Earth? What is the point of stanza 4?
4. What does Earth want the Bard to do? How can the Bard do that? (What makes him the one to do that?) How does Earth characterize the father’s effect on her? What is implied about the effect that the Bard might have on Earth? What, in the most literal terms, is Blake’s notion of the power of poetry?

“The Clod & the Pebble”

1. How does Blake balance the points of view of Clod and Pebble? How is the Clod’s sentiment appropriate to its situation? How is the Pebble’s appropriate to its situation?
2. Which point of view is approved by Blake? By other people? (Which others?) What is the effect of presenting first the Clod, then the Pebble? What would the effect be if they were reversed?

“Holy Thursday” (Songs of Experience)

1. What is Blake referring to when he writes of “Babes reduced to misery, / Fed with cold and usurous hands”? What does “usurous” mean? Whose hands?
2. How does “song” in the *Songs of Innocence* poem relate to “song” in this poem?
3. Are the sun and fields mentioned in the *Songs of Innocence* poem? In what poems in that book are they mentioned? In what context? What is the relevance for this poem?
4. What do you make of the last stanza? Relate the last two stanzas to *There Is No Natural Religion* [b].

“The Chimney Sweeper” (Songs of Experience)

1. Who is the person questioning the child? How has the child been depersonalized? Where have his parents gone? What should they be doing?
2. How does the child account for the situation he is in? What has happened to his misery?
3. How is this child like Tom Dacre and the speaker in *Songs of Innocence*’s “The Chimney Sweeper”? How is he different?
4. How have “God & his Priest & King” “made up a heaven of our misery”?

“Nurse’s Song” (Songs of Experience)

1. How does this nurse respond to the children’s voices? Why does her face turn “green and pale”?
2. Why does she call the children in?
3. Why don’t we hear the children’s voices in this poem?
4. What does Blake mean by “disguise”? What would the children be doing in winter? At night?

“The Sick Rose”

1. How is the rose portrayed? What is “thy bed / Of crimson joy”?
2. How is the worm portrayed? Where does it come from? What does it do?
3. What is the meter of the poem? How does it add to the effect of the poem?

“The Tyger”

1. How does the speaker address the tiger? What questions does the speaker ask? How are they like the questions addressed to the lamb? How are they different?
2. What is the speaker asking about in lines 3-4? Does the speaker know the answer? How does this compare to “The Lamb”?
3. How does the speaker characterize the tiger’s eyes? Where did the tiger’s creator have to go? How did the creator get there? What did the creator have to do to, once there?
4. What did it take to create the tiger’s heart? What kind of artisan does the creator seem like? What qualities would the creator have to have?
5. How does the cosmos respond to the tiger’s creation? How might the creator have responded? Why does the speaker ask the question of line 20?
6. How does the final stanza differ from the first stanza? Why?
7. What is the meter of the poem? Where is the meter different from that of “The Lamb”? Why?

“My Pretty Rose Tree”

Why does the speaker reject the flower? How does the rose-tree respond to him? Why? What do you make of the last line? What human situation does this parable imitate?

“Ah Sun-Flower”

1. What characteristic of the sunflower does the speaker focus on? How does the speaker characterize the sunflower? What does the sunflower want? Why can’t it get it?
2. How is the Youth characterized? How is the Virgin characterized? Where do they rise from? Is this the Resurrection? What do they want? Do they get it?

“The Garden of Love”

1. Where was the garden once? What is there now? How is that different from what the speaker had expected?
2. How is the chapel characterized? How is the garden characterized? How has the garden

been transformed?

3. What are the Priests doing? How does the meter of the last two lines reinforce their meaning?

“London”

1. What does Blake mean by “charter’d”? Is that good? Or not? How does it apply to the Thames?

2. What does the speaker see in people’s faces? Hear in people’s voices? What does Blake mean by “mind-forg’d”?

3. (a) Why is every church “blackning”? (b) What does “appalls” mean? (c) Why does the chimney-sweeper’s cry appall the churches?

4. What is the effect of “the hapless Soldier’s sigh”? What is Blake’s point? What effect does your answer have on your answer to 3(c), above?

5. Why does the harlot’s curse blast the infant’s tear? (Do you buy the editors’ explanation of line 15?) How does it affect marriages? How is marriage portrayed in the last line? What is Blake’s point?

“The Human Abstract”

1. How does the point of view of stanza 1 differ from that in stanza one of “The Divine Image”? How here do Mercy and Pity have a human form? How are Peace and Love defined in stanza 2?

2. What situation does Cruelty exploit? How? What roles does Cruelty play?

3. What plant starts growing? Where does it start growing? What nurtures it? What does it become? What does it nurture?

4. Where do “the Gods of the earth and sea” seek the tree? Where does it actually grow?

5. What do you make of Blake’s allegorical parable?

“Infant Sorrow”

1. Who is the speaker? How is he (she) received into the world? What attitude does he take toward the world? How is he perceived? How does he perceive himself?

2. How is the image in the fourth line apt? What other Blake poem or poems does this image recall?

3. What are “swadling bands”? Why is the child “bound and weary”? What is the quality of

his (her) response to the world? To Mother?

4. What feeling do you get from the poem? Why would Blake write such a thing?

“A Poison Tree”

1. What problem is posed at the beginning of the poem? How is it resolved? How long does it take to resolve it?

2. What is the second problem? How is it different from the first? How does the speaker deal with it? With what result?

3. How does the speaker cultivate his anger? How does it respond? What form does it take? (What is the relationship to *All Religions Are One*, Principle 1?)

4. What does the tree bear? Why does the speaker’s foe find it attractive? What does the foe do? With what result? How does the speaker respond? What has been the effect of this anger?

“To Tirzah”

1. Read the footnotes on p. 1334. What/who is Tirzah? Where does the speaker get the words of line 4? What is his point? What doctrine does he adduce to justify his attitude?

2. To what does the speaker compare the Sexes? What is their origin? What is their fate?

3. What has transformed Death, and how? What is the consequence for the Sexes?

4. What has been Tirzah’s effect on the speaker? What does the speaker mean by “bind my Nostrils, Eyes, & Ears”? What has been her effect on his tongue? How is Tirzah like God creating Adam in Genesis?

5. What has Christ’s death set the speaker free from?

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

1. What feelings and attitudes are expressed in lines 1-2? Why would Rintrah roar?
2. What shows that the “just man” (4) is just? What seems to be the result of that behavior? Do the roses just spring up? Do the thorns disappear?
3. What happened to the perilous path? Rivers and springs are mentioned often in Biblical poetry. What did they mean to a nomadic people like the Biblical Hebrews? Are the things that are happening in stanza three good things? or bad? What does “bleached bones” suggest? How does “red clay” bring forth?
4. What could the villain (14) have done? What did he do instead? What did he do to the just man? Why did the villain do that?
5. Who is the “sneaking serpent” (17)? How does he act? Is that appropriate to a “sneaking serpent”? What has happened to the just man? Where is he? How does he act? How has he changed since stanza two? Why is Rintrah roaring?

Plate 3

6. What now has happened, thirty-three years after the beginning of “a new heaven”? How does Blake characterize Swedenborg? Whose is the tomb, and what are the “linen clothes”? What events accompany the arrival of “the Eternal Hell”?
7. What is the orthodox Christian attitude toward hate? What is Blake’s attitude? What are the “religious” definitions of good and evil? Does Blake buy those definitions? If so, does he therefore reject evil?

Plate 4

8. How are we supposed to relate “The Voice of the Devil” to Blake’s voice? Does the Devil make a distinction between the Bible and the scriptures sacred to other religions?
9. If the Devil regards these three propositions as errors, does that mean that they are really true? What does the Devil think about the relationship between Body and Soul? between Energy and Reason? [Does it make sense to substitute “Desire” for “Energy”?]
10. What is the orthodox Christian notion of damnation? From that point of view, what should people do about their desires? What does the Devil think?

Plate 5

11. What is the imagined relationship between Reason and Desire? What allows Reason to restrain Desire? What eventually happens to Desire?
12. How are Reason and Desire represented in *Paradise Lost*? in the Book of Job? What

is the orthodox attitude toward each work? What does Blake conclude about such religious “histories”? How is this an effective argument for the Devil’s viewpoint?

13. In interpreting the Gospel, what does Blake propose about the relationship between Reason and “the comforter or Desire”? (Relate this idea to *There is No Natural Religion* [a].) What does he propose about Jehovah? How is such a Jehovah an appropriate sender of Desire? And if Christ once prayed for Desire, and if Christ is now Jehovah, what must Christ think of Desire? (What does that imply about orthodox Christianity?)

14. How does Blake characterize Milton’s writing about heaven? about hell? What does Blake imply about the “true Poet”? (Relate this to *All Religions are One*.)

A Memorable Fancy

15. How does the Devil (or is it Blake?) regard what is going on in Hell? How do Angels regard it? (What happens if for “Angels” we substitute “most people”?) What did the Devil do, and why?

16. At home, Blake looks down on a “flat sided steep” (his copper plate) that is “on the abyss of the five senses.” [The “deep” or “abyss” is the term used in Genesis 1:2 to denote the unformed matter of the earth before the seven days of Creation.] What does he see? How does he interpret it? What does the Devil’s sentence propose about sensory experience? about the imagination? Relate this to the first of the Devil’s “Contraries” (Plate 4).

Proverbs of Hell

17. What is a **proverb**? What advantage does a proverb have in persuasion?

18. Which of these proverbs seem to assert evil things? good things? Which seem likely to be true? Which seem off base? Do any of the proverbs seem both true and evil?

19. Which proverbs seem to go with which other proverbs? What groups can you make? What similarities unify each group?

20. Which proverbs seem relevant to which of the *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*?

21. Which proverbs seem most difficult to understand?

Plate 11

22. According to Blake, who originated worship? How does Blake account for the many different kinds of religion? (Relate this to *All Religions are One*.)

23. How does Blake account for the existence of organized religion and the clergy? What happened to the “Gods or Geniuses” in the process? What are “forms of worship,” and where do they come from?

24. According to the clergy, where did the “forms of worship” come from? Who actually conceived of them? What understanding has been lost in this process?

Plate 12: A Memorable Fancy

25. What does Blake ask Isaiah and Ezekiel? What did the prophets assert? What bothers Blake about that? What does he mean by their assertions being “the cause of imposition”? (Relate this to Plate 11’s account of the origins of organized religion.)

26. What is Isaiah’s answer? Did he see God? Did he hear God’s voice? Why, then, did he claim that he spoke with the voice of God?

27. What objection does Blake make? What is Isaiah’s answer? What does he mean by “a firm persuasion”? What limitation do many people have?

28. What does Ezekial mean by “the first principles of human perception”? How does he characterize the “philosophy” of Israel? What attitude toward other nations and other religions did the Jews take? How does Blake interpret the Psalms of David? How does Ezekial’s account of the development of Judaism, and the eventual dominance of Christianity, reflect the process described on Plate 11?

29. Do Isaiah and Ezekial seem persuaded that their religion is better or truer than all others? than the Greek religion? than the religions of the North American Indians? What may be the consequences of following one’s “genius or conscience”?

Plate 14

30. Why does an angel guard the tree of life? What would happen if that tree were left unguarded? What will happen when the angel leaves his guard? What how will creation be transformed?

31. How will “an improvement of sensual enjoyment” bring about this transformation? What is necessary for that improvement to come?

32. How does Blake’s method of printing his prophetic books correspond to the message that he wants to convey?

33. Blake’s reference to man’s “cavern” may be an allusion to Plato’s cave. In *The Republic* Plato described human beings as they are limited by the belief that what they sense is what is real: it is as though they were chained to benches in a dark cave and, seeing the shadows of cut-out shadow puppets cast on the wall, called those shadows “lamb” and “dog” and “man” and “woman.” To Plato, philosophy “raises our perceptions above matter” and thus releases us from our chains and leads us out into real world. To Blake, is that kind of “philosophy” liberating? What does he think will release humanity from its “cavern”?

Plate 15: A Memorable Fancy

34. What is the difference between Blake's account of making his prophetic books and, say, an encyclopedia writer's? What is his purpose in making these books?

Plate 16

35. What are the Giants? Who put them in chains, and why?

36. What is something that is "prolific"? (Is Blake "prolific"? How?) What is the relationship between the Prolific and the Devourer? What does the Devourer think? Why is he wrong? How does the Prolific need the Devourer? (What happens if we substitute "the artist" for "the Prolific" and "the consumer" for "the Devourer"?)

37. What objection does Blake bring up? What does he answer?

38. What is the necessary relationship between the "prolific" people and the "devouring"? What does Religion try to do? Is it the same thing that Christ wanted to do?

39. In the days before the Flood, "Giants walked the earth." According to Blake, who was one of those Giants? What do the Giants represent?

A Memorable Fancy

40. What warning does "An Angel" give Blake? What sort of person does this Angel sound like? [In 1800 Blake would meet someone rather like the Angel in the person of William Hayley. See the introduction to Blake.] What does Blake propose that they do?

41. While Christ was fasting and praying in the wilderness, the devil took him to the pinnacle of the temple and tempted him to jump; but Christ refused, saying, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Matthew 4:5-7; Luke 4:9-12). Where does the Angel take Blake? What are the stages of their journey, and what do those stages signify? Where do Blake and the Angel end up? What does Blake propose to the Angel? How does the Angel respond? (Do you find any of this story funny?)

42. What do they eventually see in "the infinite Abyss" [see question 16, above]? What does the Angel tell Blake? What is Leviathan? ("In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent, and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea." Isaiah 24:1.)

43. Why does the Angel leave the abyss and retreat to the mill? What happens when he does so? What does the harper's song suggest about what has happened? When Blake finds the Angel, what does the Angel ask him? What answer does Blake give him?

44. What does Blake propose to the Angel? How does the Angel respond? What does Blake do? What happens when he takes up Swedenborg's volumes? What is he suggesting about Swedenborg? What is the last thing he does before he presents the Angel's "lot"?

Robert Browning

“Porphyria’s Lover”

1. What was the weather like “tonight”? How does the speaker characterize the wind? How did the speaker react to the weather?
2. What did Porphyria do when she came in? What sort of person does she seem to be?
3. Why does the speaker say, “When no voice replied” (15), rather than “When I didn’t answer”? What does that suggest about his relationship to himself?
4. How did she respond to him? What did he want from her? Why, in his opinion, was she incapable of that? (16-25)
5. *Whose* “passion sometimes would prevail” (26)? Where has she been? Who is the “one so pale For love of her”? How is that love “all in vain”? What was the result of the “passion”?
6. What or who was “Happy and proud” (32)? How did he know that Porphyria “worshiped” him? What was the basis for his conviction? How did he react? Why would he “debate” a next move?
7. What, to his mind, was her state at that moment? (36-37) Why did he strangle her? How did he strangle her? (Where has he previously mentioned her hair? In what state was it, and why?) What emotional relationship is suggested in lines 41-42?
8. What did he do next? How did he do it? What did he find? (Where has he previously mentioned her eyes?)
9. What did he do next? (46-51) Why did her cheek “blush”? What does he mean by “once more” (47) and “Only, this time” (50)?
10. What “has its utmost will” (53)? What “will”? What had it “scorned”? What does it have instead? What is weird about this?
11. What was Porphyria’s “darling one wish” (57)? How did he know what that wish was? How did he satisfy that wish?
12. What might the speaker expect God to say? What is his attitude toward God’s silence?
13. Who might the speaker be talking to?
14. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem?

“Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister”

1. What is Brother Lawrence doing? Is that a proper activity for a monk? What is the speaker’s attitude toward him? Is that a proper attitude for a monk?
2. How does the speaker’s attitude come out in stanza two? What does he mean by calling Brother Lawrence’s conversation “wise talk”? [Oak galls were used to make ink.]
3. Who is “we” in stanza three? What are “we” doing, and why?
4. What are Dolores and Sanchicha doing (st. 4)? How does the speaker describe them? What is his attitude toward them? What does he think Lawrence’s attitude is? Does Lawrence “let it show”?
5. What practices does the speaker observe at dinner (st. 5)? What do you think of them? How does the speaker make this a basis for hating Brother Lawrence?
6. How does Brother Lawrence distribute the melons (st. 6)? What does the speaker think of this? How does the speaker sabotage Lawrence?
7. What plot does the speaker imagine laying for Brother Lawrence (st. 7)? How does this relate to a monk’s religious vocation?
8. How does the “scrofulous French novel” contrast with the kind of books produced in the monastery? [“Scrofula” is a disfiguring glandular condition. “Belial” is the devil most often associated with sins of the flesh.] What kind of book might Brother Lawrence carry with him in his “sieve” (loose-woven basket) when he goes out to pick “greengages” (plums)? How does the speaker know what’s in the novel?
9. How far is the speaker willing to go to express his hatred? What is he unwilling to do? How much time has elapsed between the beginning of the poem and the end?

“My Last Duchess”

1. What does the speaker mean by “my *last* Duchess”? What does he indicate by saying that she looks “*as if* she were alive”? Who was the portrait painter?
2. What is the relationship between the speaker and the person spoken to? According to the Duke, how do people respond to the painting? (6-13) Is there any indication that the other person has said anything?
3. How is the painting presented? Where is it? What is its setting? Who controls who looks at it? How does he exercise that control?
4. What evoked “that spot Of joy” (14-15)? To the Duke, what should have evoked it? What kind of things did the painter say to her? (13-21)
5. What does the Duke find to criticize in her? How does his tone change at line 24? (21-31)
6. How did the Duke interpret the Duchess’s courtesy? What reason did he have for interpreting it that way? (31-34)
7. Why didn’t the Duke tell the Duchess that he was displeased? How does he characterize his displeasure? How might the Duchess have responded? (34-43)
8. What commands did the Duke give? With what result? (43-46)
9. Who is the person the Duke is speaking to? Why has he come there? What are they negotiating? What does the Duke say his greatest concern is? What is he concerned about, in fact? (46-53) What does *munificence* mean? What is a *dowry*?
10. What is happening in the last three lines? How does it define what’s going on in the poem? What kind of life can the Count’s daughter expect? If you were the Count’s representative, what would you report?

“The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed’s Church”

1. Where is the Bishop? Who is with him? Are they nephews, or sons, or are there some of both there? (1-3)
2. Who is “She” (4)? Why didn’t he marry her? What did he do instead? What happened to her? What is happening to him? What conclusion does he draw? How does it relate to the quotation in line 1? (4-9)
3. What does he think about while he lies there? How does it relate to his choice of St. Praxed’s for his tomb? (10-15)
4. What is the “niche”? How did Gandolf cheat the Bishop? Where is Gandolf now? (15-19)

Where is the Bishop's niche? What things can be seen from there? Why is he concerned about what can be seen from there? (20-24)

5. What will the tomb be made of? What will it look like? What satisfaction will the Bishop draw from that? (25-33)

6. Why isn't the Bishop being buried in his own church? (What is a *conflagration*?) What treasure does he direct his children to? Where, evidently, did he get it? What does he want them to do with it? Why does he remind them of the villas (45-46)? Why does the Bishop care? How will Gandolf see the tomb? (34-50)

7. What is the point of lines 51-52? How does that sentiment relate to what comes before and what comes after?

8. Why does the Bishop change the stone for his tomb? Does his reason make sense? Is that more expensive, or less? (53-55)

9. What scenes will be shown on the frieze? Do they sound appropriate to a Bishop? (56-62)

10. What makes the Bishop anxious? What does he fear his sons might do? Why might they entomb the Bishop in "moldy travertine"? What result does he fear from that? (What does he mean by "from his tomb-top" [67]?) What does he offer them as a compromise? What must his bath be made of? (62-70) What does he think his sons value? How can he promise those things? (73-75)

11. What concerns him about his epitaph? How will he outdo Gandolf in this? (76-79)

12. What satisfactions does the Bishop look forward to? How does that relate to orthodox Christian thought on the afterlife? (80-84) How does he prepare himself for death? In what pose does he imagine himself? (85-90) What thoughts run through his head? (91-100)

13. What is his assessment of his life? Why does he insist on "All *lapis*," and how does he propose to enforce his will? (101-103)

14. What does he think his sons want from him? What would convince him that they are on his side? (104-113) What does he think they "wish" (115)? What does he expect them to do? (116-18) How does he dismiss them? Where does he seem to think he is? Where do his thoughts finally rest?

"Meeting at Night" and "Parting at Morning"

What is the man doing in the first poem? How much effort does he put into it? What does he see? What other sensory impressions are evoked? How does the landscape relate to his desires? In the second poem, what does the man intend to do? Why? Why won't he stay?

Alfred, Lord Tennyson
"The Lady of Shalott"

How many stanzas are in each section? How many lines are in each stanza? Are all the lines the same length? What is the rhyme scheme? Is it the same for each stanza?

Part 1 (1-36)

1. What is being described in the first four lines? Does it sound like an attractive scene? Where is the road? Where does it go? Where are the people? Where is the island? Where is the road relative to the island? Where are the lilies? What do the people do?
2. What other features of the landscape are mentioned in stanza two? How does a willow "whiten"? What makes the aspen shiver? What is the "wave"? What does the word "dusk" mean? Is it usually a verb? How can a breeze "dusk"? What is the relationship between the breezes and the wave? What impressions of the scene do you get from this description? What is the season? What is the temperature? What noises are suggested?
3. What is the effect of the word "forever" in line 12? What feeling do you get from the description of the castle on the island? What does "imbowers" mean? What is a bower?
4. What kinds of traffic are on the river (stanza three)? How are they different? Why is each on the river? Does this sound like the time of King Arthur? What does "margin" mean?
5. What questions are asked in stanza three (24-27)? What is a "casement"? What is the difference between being seen and being "known in all the land" (26)?
6. What answer is given in stanza four? What season is it? When does the workday begin? When does it end? What kind of person is a reaper? What does he do? How is the Lady of Shalott characterized? How trustworthy is that characterization?

Part 2 (37-72)

7. How does the Lady spend her time? Why does she spend it that way? What might she want to do? (What does "stay" mean?) Where does Camelot lie relative to the castle? What is the curse? Is her work satisfying to her? [How was cloth made in Tennyson's day? What sort of people made it? Under what conditions?]
8. What does the mirror show? Why does the Lady look in the mirror instead of looking out the window? Who does she see? Where are they? What motivates each one? How does the Lady relate to them?
9. Why does Tennyson call the Lady's weaving her "web"? What myth is he alluding to? What does she weave into her cloth? What subjects does she choose? Why does she choose those subjects? How does the Lady react? What are the "shadows"? What does she want instead?

Part 3 (73-117)

10. Who is the “he” of line 74? How far away is he? Where is he? Where is he going?

11. How does he look? What is on his shield? What does that indicate? How is his bridle described? What sounds are indicated? (What might attract the Lady’s attention? How might she respond?) What references to the heavens does Tennyson make in his description? Why? What is the effect?

12. What attracts the Lady’s attention? How does she see him? How does she respond? What happens at that moment? How does she interpret that event?

Part 4 (118-171)

13. What is the weather like? How has it changed since the opening of the poem? (Can you relate it to the Lady’s emotional state?) What does the Lady do? Why does she do that? What does she intend to do? Why?

14. What does the Lady look at? How does she look? How is she described? (What is a “seer”? What “mischance” has he been given to see? What makes him “bold”?)

15. What chain does she “loose” (133)? Where does she lie down? How is she dressed? What falls on her? From where? Where is she going, and how? What is she doing? Why is it her “last” song (143)?

16. Who or what heard the song? What kind of song? How does the Lady die? Where are her eyes set?

17. Where does she end up? What attention does she get? What effect does her arrival have? How does Lancelot react?

18. How do the subjects of her weaving relate to what happens to her? What did she want? Did she try to get it? Did she get it? Is her death suicide?

19. How old was the Lady? How did she look? What do we know about her? What do we *think* we know about her?

“Ulysses”

1. Who is the speaker? How old is he? Where is he? What is his position? Who is the “aged wife” (3)? What responsibility does he have? What is his attitude toward that responsibility? Toward the people he governs? How does that attitude affect his attitude toward himself?

2. What has the place of travel been in his life? (What are “the lees”? What does it mean to “drink Life to the lees”?) What kind of experiences has he had in his travels?

3. What does he mean when he says, "I am become a name"? What does it mean to roam "with a hungry heart" (12)? How might his experiences have prepared him to govern when he got home? How was he received in foreign courts?
4. What other experience did he have? Where did he have it? What is his attitude toward that experience? (16-17)
5. How does he interpret experience? What metaphor does he use (19-21)? What lies beyond the arch? What attitude does he have toward it? Where might he "move"? What happens when he "moves"? What happens when he "pauses"? What metaphor does he use to express his attitude (23)? What kind of thing "rusts" or "shines"? Under what conditions? What kind of "use"?
6. What definition of life does he reject (24)? What does his thirst for experience demand? What limitations confront him? What makes "every hour" valuable?
7. What does he mean by "vile it were"? What would he find "vile"? What is "three suns"? What options seem open to him? What thing or action lies "Beyond the utmost bound of human thought" (32)?
8. What does he do for Telemachus? What does he expect Telemachus to do? What qualities does he think Telemachus will bring to the task? [The "household gods" are the images that represent the souls of the family's ancestors.] How does Telemachus differ from his father? What is the father's attitude toward him?
9. What does Ulysses intend to do? Who are the sailors who will accompany him? What is their motive for doing so? [*Opposed* (48) means "placed in opposition." Paraphrase: "They placed their free hearts and free foreheads in opposition to the thunder and the sunshine."]
10. Who is Ulysses speaking to? [Speeches like this—the leader's speech to those he leads—are a common and much-admired feature of epics.] What is he telling them? (What do the words "ere" (51) and "strove" (53) mean?) What does he see and hear? How is that relevant to what he intends to do?
11. What mission does he intend for them? (He bids them: "sitting well in order[,] smite The sounding furrows" (58-59). Their ship is a galley. It has a sail (44), but it also has oars.) Where does he intend for them to sail? In what direction? What will bring an end to his voyage? What may happen to them? Whom does he hope to see? Where? What limits has time placed on their efforts? What will compensate? What attitude toward themselves and their adventure should they take?
12. How is this poem like "The Lady of Shalott"?

“The Passing of Arthur” from *Idylls of the King*

1. What is being described in the first five lines? How is Bedivere characterized? Who is “the man” of line 3? When did he tell it? To whom did he tell it?
2. Who is Arthur? Where was Arthur’s army going (see line 29)? When did Bedivere hear Arthur? (6-8)
3. What is the state of Arthur’s mind on this night?
 - 3a. Where has Arthur found Christ? Where has he looked and failed to find Him? How has he served Christ? What does Arthur think will happen to him soon? (9-12)
 - 3b. What is his attitude toward his recent experiences? What would set things right? (13-17) What other explanation does he come up with? According to that explanation, what is responsible for the impression that the world is misshapen? What limits humanity’s ability to see the world truly? (18-21)
 - 3c. What does Arthur mean by calling himself “simple”? What did he intend? What did he achieve? (22-23)
 - 3d. Who are the “wife and friend”? What did he learn about them? With what result? (24-25) What does he mean when he says that “my realm Reels back into the beast”? What conclusion does he come to about his relationship to God? What prediction does he make? (25-28)
4. What visited Arthur when he was sleeping? What does Gawain tell him? How does Arthur react?
 - 4a. What is Gawain’s attitude? What does he predict? What does he promise? (33-37)
 - 4b. How does Gawain’s voice sound in the dream as it fades? What sounds can be heard in the night? (38-42) What are those sounds compared to? In the *Aeneid*, the sleeping Aeneas is visited by the ghost of Hector, Troy’s greatest hero. Hector tells him not to fight the Greeks but to carry Troy’s gods away to a new land. Aeneas awakes to hear the Greeks invading Troy. (41-45)
5. How does Bedivere react? (50-55) What is his attitude toward Gawain? (56-58) How does he characterize Modred and his knights? (56-62) What does he want Arthur to do?
6. What earlier battles had Arthur and Bedivere fought? What was their motive in fighting those battles? How is the coming battle different? How is the enemy different? Why does that bother Arthur? (65-74) What will Arthur do? How does he characterize his mental state? When did he start feeling this way, and why? (75-78; see p. 2019 for background)
7. Where does the final battle take place? When does it take place? In what weather? What kind of battle is it?

- 7a. What is "the sunset bound" (81)? Where did Lyonesse come from? ["upheaven" (82) means "heaved up."] What will happen to it? What kind of people live there? What makes this an appropriate place to have such a battle?
- 7b. The battle is fought "when the great light of heaven Burned at his lowest in the rolling year" (90-91). What day is that? What makes that an appropriate day?
- 7c. How is the battle site characterized? ["closed" (92) means "came together in battle."] What is the weather like? What effect does it have on the soldiers? (96-98)
- 7d. What is Arthur's state during the battle? (98-99) How is the battle characterized? What deeds are done?
- 7e. What things are seen? What things are heard? What things are not seen? (102-112) What sounds do Modred's soldiers make? What sounds are made at the end of the battle? (113-17)
8. What is heard after the battle is over? (118-121) What time of day is it? How does the weather change? (122-26) What does Arthur see when he looks at the battlefield? What does he hear? (126-135) [Describing the death of King Priam of Troy, Aeneas says: "Now he lies along the shore, a giant trunk, his head torn from his shoulders, as a corpse without a name."]
9. How does Arthur look as he speaks to Bedivere? (136-38) What is "this great voice" (139) that he hears? What does it imply about the deaths of Arthur's knights? (139-142) How does Arthur feel about himself? (143-46)
10. How does Bedivere answer Arthur's doubts? Who still must be dealt with? (147-153)
11. What do Bedivere and Arthur mean by the word "house"? How does Arthur define his "house"? (153-58) How does he commend Bedivere? How does he respond to Bedivere's words? What does he do? (159-165) What happens to Arthur? What happens to Modred? What is "Excalibur"? (165-69)
12. What has been the result of the battle? What does Bedivere do for Arthur? How is the chapel described? Where is it? What time is it? (170-180)
13. How does Arthur understand the consequences of the battle? How did they live before this? What were the satisfactions of that life? (183-89) What did Merlin predict? What is Arthur's attitude? (190-94) What does he ask Bedivere to do? How had Arthur received Excalibur? (195-206)
14. How does Bedivere react? Where does he go? What does he see when he looks at Excalibur? What does he decide to do? (207-233)
15. What does Arthur ask? What does Bedivere answer? How does Arthur react? What does he tell Bedivere to do? (234-249)

16. What does Bedivere do? Why doesn't he throw the sword? (250-280)
17. What does Arthur ask? What does Bedivere answer? How does Arthur react? How is his reaction different this time? What motives does he ascribe to Bedivere? What does he tell Bedivere to do? What does he threaten to do if Bedivere fails him? (281-300)
18. What does Bedivere do? What happens? (301-315)
19. What does Arthur ask? How does Bedivere react to what he has seen? (316-329)
20. What does Arthur ask Bedivere to do? Why? What does Bedivere do? (330-343)
[Aeneas carries his father, Anchises, on his shoulders as they leave burning Troy.]
21. As Bedivere walks toward the lake, what things does he hear? What is the landscape like? (344-360)
22. What appears on the moonlit lake? Who are the occupants? How are they dressed? How do they act? (361-371)
23. What does Arthur ask Bedivere to do? How do the queens act? Why is Arthur's helmet shattered? How has he changed from when he was enthroned at Camelot? To what is he compared now? (372-393)
24. How does Bedivere react? What significance does he see in Arthur's passing? What were "the true old times" like? How long have they been gone? In his view, what does the Round Table symbolize? Why does it symbolize that? What has happened to the Round Table? What does that imply about the world? What is left of the Round Table? How will Bedivere spend the rest of his life? (394-406) [Two traditions may be involved here: the Three Ages and the silencing of the oracles. The Three Ages were the Golden Age of gods, the Silver Age of heroes, and the Iron Age of ordinary, corrupt humanity. The pagan oracles of Delphi, Cumae, and the like supposedly fell silent from the moment of Christ's birth.]
25. How does Arthur respond? Is this a more positive view of the future? What does Arthur ask Bedivere to do? What arguments does he make? What, in his view, is the effect of prayer? (407-423) Where is Arthur going? What is it like there? What will happen to him there? (424-432)
26. What is the barge compared to? [What is a "swansong"?] What happens to the barge? (433-440) How does Bedivere react? What does he remember at this moment? (441-45) What does he think will happen to Arthur? What does he wonder about the queens? (446-456) What does he hear? How does he react? What does he see? What path does the barge take? What lies at the end of that path? What time of day is it? What direction is the barge going? (457-469)

Then knights, squires, and yeomen awakened the king, and he was so dazed that he knew not where he was. He stayed awake until it was nigh day and then he fell to slumbering again, not sleeping but not thoroughly awake. Then it seemed to the king that Sir Gawain actually came unto him with a number of fair ladies.

When King Arthur saw him he cried, "Welcome, my sister's son; I thought that ye were dead. And now that I see thee alive, much am I beholden unto almighty Jesus. Ah, fair nephew, what are these ladies that have come hither with you?"

"Sir," said Sir Gawain, "all those are ladies for whom I have fought when I was a living man. And all these are those whom I did battle for in righteous quarrels; at their devout prayer, because I did battle for them righteously, God hath given them the grace to bring me hither unto you. Thus God hath given me leave to warn you away from your death: for if ye fight to-morn with Sir Mordred, as ye have both agreed, doubt ye not that ye shall be slain, and the most part of your people on both sides. . . ." (734-35)

When King Arthur prepared to depart for the meeting in the field he warned all his host that if they should see any sword drawn, "see that ye come on fiercely and slay that traitor Sir Mordred, for I in no wise trust him."

In like wise Sir Mordred warned his host: "If ye see any sword drawn, see that ye come on fiercely and then slay all who stand before you, for in no way will I trust in this treaty; I know well that my father wishes to be avenged upon me."

So they met for their appointment and were thoroughly agreed and accorded; wine was fetched and they drank together. Just then an adder came out of a little heath-bush and stung a knight on the foot. When the knight felt the sting, he looked down and saw the adder; at once he drew his sword to slay the adder, and thought to cause no harm. But when the hosts on both sides saw that sword drawn, they blew trumpets and horns and shouted grimly, and the two hosts rushed toward each other.

Then King Arthur mounted his horse and said, "Alas, this unhappy day!" So he rode to join his party, and Sir Mordred did in like wise. And never since was there seen a more doleful battle in any Christian land, for there was great rushing and riding, thrusting and striking, and many a deadly stroke was dealt. But King Arthur rode steadily throughout the army of Sir Mordred many times and did full nobly, as a noble king should; never at any time did he weaken. And Sir Mordred did his duty that day and put himself in great peril. Thus they fought all the long day, and no knight ever stinted till he was laid to the cold earth. So they fought on till it was near night, and by that time there were a hundred thousand who lay dead upon the ground. (735-36)

Then the king got his spear in both hands and ran toward Sir Mordred, crying, "Traitor, now has thy death-day come!"

When Sir Mordred heard King Arthur he ran toward him with his sword drawn in his hand. Then King Arthur smote Sir Mordred under the shield with a thrust of his spear on through the body more than a fathom. When Sir Mordred felt that he had his death-wound, he thrust himself with all his might up to the handguard of King Arthur's spear; and right so, holding his sword in both his hands, he smote his father King Arthur upon the side of the head so that the sword pierced the helmet and the brain-pan. Therewith Sir Mordred fell stark dead to the earth; and the noble King Arthur fell to the earth and there he swooned often, and Sir Lucan and Sir Bedivere lifted him up each time. So they led him, weak between them, to a little chapel not far from the sea, and when the king was there he seemed reasonably comfortable. (737)

Then Sir Lucan took up the king on one side and Sir Bedivere did so on the other side, and in the lifting the king swooned. Also with the lifting, Sir Lucan fell into a swoon and part of his guts fell out of his body, and therewith the noble knight's heart burst. (737-38)

Then Sir Bedivere departed and went to the sword and quickly took it up and went to the water's side, and there he bound the girdle about the hilt; then he threw the sword as far into the water as he might. And there came an arm and a hand above the water which caught it and shook and brandished it thrice and then vanished with the sword into the water. (739)

Then sir Bedivere took the king upon his back and so went with him to the water's side. When they reached there they saw a little barge which waited fast by the bank with many fair ladies in it. Among them all was a queen, and they all had black hoods; they all wept and shrieked when they saw King Arthur.

“Now put me into that barge,” said the king.

Sir Bedivere did so gently, and three queens received him there with great mourning and put him down; in one of their laps King Arthur laid his head. Then that queen said, “Ah, dear brother, why have ye tarried so long from me? Alas, this wound on your head hath caught over-much cold.”

So they rowed from the land and Sir Bedivere beheld all those ladies go from him. Then Sir Bedivere cried, “Ah, my lord Arthur, what shall become of me, now that ye go from me and leave me here alone among my enemies?”

“Comfort thyself,” said the king, “And do as well as thou may, for in me is no more trust to trust in. I must go into the Vale of Avalon to heal me of my grievous wound. And if thou here nevermore of me, pray for my soul!”

But ever the queens and ladies wept and shrieked, so that it was a pity to hear. As soon as Sir Bedivere had lost sight of the barge, he wept and wailed and then took to the forest and walked all night. And in the morning he was aware of a chapel and a hermitage between two ancient woods. (739)

William Wordsworth
"Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey"

Section 1 (1-22)

1. Who is the speaker? Is he Wordsworth? Or someone else?
2. Where is he? How long has it been since he was there?
3. What sensuous features of the landscape does he respond to? What feelings are evoked in him? What is the scene's effect on him? What effect do his feelings have on the landscape? (1-8)
4. What does he do? Where does he do it? What does he see? from what distance? (9-14)
5. What are hedge-rows? What is their function? What relationship does he see between human beings and the landscape? (14-22)

Section 2 (22-49)

6. What are "these beauteous forms"? What is a blind man's "view" of a landscape? Why is the speaker's experience *not* like that? (22-24)
7. What is "them" in line 26? What have they given the speaker? In what circumstances? (25-30)
8. What is "unremembered" pleasure (31)? What is the effect of such feelings? (30-35)
9. What are "the affections" (42)?
10. What is the result of the process described in this section? What state does the speaker come to (43-46)? What awareness does he come to (47-49)?

Section 3 (49-57)

11. What is "this" (end of line 49)? What is a "vain" belief (50)? What has he done nonetheless (55-57)?
12. Under what circumstance has he done that? How has he felt? (51-54) What would seem to be the effect?

Section 4 (58-111)

13. What happens in lines 58-61? How does he experience it? How does he feel about it?
14. Where is he standing (62)? What two things does he have with him (62-63)? What are his thoughts, and why are they pleasing (63-65)?
15. What does he "dare to hope" (65)? How was he when he first "came among these hills" (67)? How old was he? What was his relationship to nature and this landscape? How did

he act? How did he feel? What did he respond to? (66-83)

16. What has changed with him since that time (83-85)? How does he feel about that change (85-88)? What has he learned since those days? What does he now respond to in nature (88-91)? How does he characterize his experience (91-93)?

17. What does he now sense in the landscape (93-99)? Is it only in the landscape? What sort of thing is it (99-102)?

18. How does he define himself now in relation to the landscape? What is “all the mighty world of eye, and ear” (105-106)? How does he define that world (106-107)? How is that definition different from a scientist’s, for instance? What does the speaker find for himself in “nature and the language of the sense” (108-111)?

Section 5 (111-159)

19. If he hadn’t learned to relate to nature in this way, what would have been the effect on his creative imagination (111-113)? What else in his life has made a difference (114-16)? What does Dorothy Wordsworth’s presence do for him (116-19)? What does that correspond to in his experience of this place?

20. What does he want from his sister (119-121)? What assurance does he have that his desires will be met (121-23)?

21. What is the “her” of line 123? What is it “her privilege” to do? How does she do it (125-28)? What negative forces are defeated (128-131)? What defeats them? What attitude does he adopt instead (132-34)?

22. What is the “thee” of line 135? What does he recommend (135-37)? What will happen to that experience, and when (137-39)?

23. What does he mean by the mind being “a mansion for all lovely forms” (140)? What will the function of memory be (141-42)? What may happen in the future (143-44)? Why will the speaker be remembered with “healing thoughts / Of tender joy” (144-45)?

24. What does he mean by “where I no more can hear / Thy voice” (147-48)? Does he want her to forget? Forget what? (146-151)

25. How does he want to be remembered? How does he characterize himself? How does he want her to act? (151-55)

26. What does he value, and under what circumstances, and why? (155-59)